

Disparities in California's child care subsidy system: A look at teacher education, stability and diversity ^[1]

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

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AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

In the past 30 years, California, like other states, has diversified the types of early care and education (ECE) settings in which it invests public funds. Before 1976, the California Department of Education (CDE) funded child care services for children of low-income families only through direct contracts with center-based child care programs, including full day child development centers and part-day preschool programs. In addition, since 1964, the federal government has contracted with certain local agencies or centers to provide services through the nationwide Head Start program.

From the beginning, standards for the CDE- and Head Start contracted programs were more stringent than those established by the Community Care Licensing division of the California State Department of Social Services (DSS) for non-subsidized, private child care centers, and they remain so. Since 1976, however, the Alternative Payment Program has been integrated into CDE's child development funding, allowing low-income families to use vouchers to access child care services in private, licensed programs, including centers and family child care homes. In 1991, with the implementation of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, and again in 1997 with the establishment of California's welfare reform program, CalWORKs, an infusion of federal dollars enabled a large number of low-income families to use their subsidy to access child care in license exempt settings, including the homes of family members, friends or neighbors, as well as in centers and licensed family child care homes.

Thus, in California today, many licensed ECE programs & a large number of license-exempt providers & receive public dollars to care for children of low-income families. While, a generation ago, the term "subsidized child care" carried a very specific meaning, referring to certain forms of center-based care that were required to meet higher standards, it is now a much more general term covering the entire regulatory and programmatic spectrum.

As a result, because of this diversity of requirements due to two different licensing standards, it is important to understand whether there are significant differences in the quality of early education and care that subsidy-eligible children receive, depending on what is available to and/or preferred by their families.

This policy brief focuses on differences in staff characteristics between licensed centers that receive public dollars solely through vouchers, and those that receive public dollars through a contract with Head Start or the California Department of Education. Specifically, we will focus on three issues & professional preparation, staff stability (turnover and tenure), and staff diversity (including ethnicity and language).

Region: United States ^[3]

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